

The Amateur Radio Service has a long-standing tradition of providing communications in times of need. In many cases these services are provided under less than ideal circumstances, such as emergency power, poor band conditions, makeshift antenna setups, and so on. Under these conditions most modes can be rendered unreadable with one very important exception; CW. It is a well known fact that a CW signal can be copied almost 100% when the same station, using SSB or some other mode, is unreadable due to conditions. In order to have a pool of operators that are proficient in using CW, it is imperative that it be kept as a requirement. The current code requirement is slow enough that most people should be able to pass it with only a few weeks of study. Granted not everyone licensed will become proficient at the code, but many will come to enjoy using it. These operators will provide the new blood necessary to keep this mode viable. Some may argue that the rest of the world no longer has any use for the code so why should we keep it. That way of thinking is equivalent to jumping off a bridge just because everyone else is doing it. It is my opinion that dropping the CW requirement will have a detrimental effect on the service and its ability to provide emergency communications.

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“Without CW, it’s just CB.”